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ABSTRACT

In November of 1981, an International Consultation on Preschool Education was organized by UNESCO with the cooperation of UNICEF. This consultation was implemented at a stage when the experiences of the past 10 years were in need of evaluation to enable the UNESCO preschool educa ion program to move toward a more comprehensive approach to meeting children's needs, especially in the context of limited resources. Objectives of the consultation were (1) to examine the situation of preschool education in the world over the past 10 years in terms of, among other factors, the needs expressed, problems identified, results achieved, trends materializing, difficulties encountered, and growth anticipated; (2) to review national strategies contributing to a global approach that have been put into practice in the course of the past decade and that take account of the socioeconomic conditions and cultural traditions of the countries concerned; and (3) to present the director general of UNESCO with specific recommendations concerning priority areas for medium- and long-range activities at the national and international levels, as well as to describe UNESCO's contribution to the development of these relevant strategies. (Results of actions taken to attain these objectives constitute the main sections of the report.) (RH)

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ED.81/CONF.605/4

Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL
SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL CONSULTATION ON PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

(Paris, 23 - 27 November 1981)

FINAL REPORT

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Unesco, Paris

INTRODUCTION

1. An International Consultation on Pre-school Education was organized by Unesco from the 23 - 27 November 1981 at Unesco Headquarters in Paris, with the cooperation of Unicef. The Consultation examined the present position, problems, issues, trends, difficulties and needs as regards the development and expansion of pre-school education and identified possible national strategies for the pre-school age child, relevant to various socio-economic conditions and cultural traditions. (Annex I - Agenda).

It was attended by twelve participants, two representatives of specialized agencies of the UN System (UNICEF and WHO) and eight observers. (Annex II).

2. The main papers submitted to the participants were the working document (ED/81/CONF.605/3) and a reference document entitled "A Statistical Overview of Pre-school Education in the World" (ST/STE/PRESCH). A wide range of related documents were also made available to and by the participants. (Annex III).

BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES OF THE MEETING

3. The Consultation is an activity of the Regular Programme of Unesco, approved by the General Conference at its twenty-first session, foreseen under Theme 1/5.3/02 - Contribution to the Improvement and Development of Educational Services for the Child. Pre-school education forms a central element of the activities under this theme. Unesco's activities in this field have developed progressively, commencing with studies on the inter-relationship between pre-primary and primary education, the principal needs and possibilities involved in the systematic expansion of pre-school education and use of radio and television for the education of pre-school age children. Subsequently, meetings of specialists studied various aspects of the problem of pre-school education. The emphasis gradually shifted to a global approach to pre-school education as the first phase of life-long education and more attention was paid to new approaches to education of the pre-school age child and to the adaptation of pre-school education to the cultural, economic and social environment of the child. The realisation of these activities reflecting this conception was facilitated by the close collaboration maintained with non-governmental organizations active in the field of early childhood care and education. The present consultation comes at a stage when the stock of experience gained over the past ten years needs to be evaluated in order to enable Unesco's programme in pre-school education to move toward a more comprehensive approach to the child's needs, especially in the context of limited resources.

4. The objectives of the Consultation were:

(a) To examine the situation of pre-school education in the world over the past ten years in terms of the needs expressed, problems identified, results achieved, trends materializing, difficulties encountered, growth anticipated, etc.

(b) To review national strategies for a global approach to the needs of pre-school age children which have been put into practice in the course of the past decade and which take account of the socio-economic conditions and cultural traditions of the countries concerned.

(c) To present the Director-General with specific recommendations concerning, in the first instance, priority areas for medium and long-term activities at the national and international levels and, secondly, Unesco's contribution to the development of the relevant strategies.

5. The Consultation was opened by the representative of the Director-General of Unesco, Mr.E. Dieuzeide, Director of the Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education. In his address of welcome, he stressed that from a rather narrow concept of pre-school education viewed as a downward extension of primary schooling, there had been a move towards the recognition of a need for a wide spectrum of educational interventions as an essential element in the basic services contributing to the healthy growth and development of the young child. The education of the pre-school age child in all societies began in the family and the community and thus parents, siblings, relations and the child's early social environment play even a significant and durable role than the traditionally known pre-school institutions such as kindergartens and nursery or preparatory schools. Accounting for the relegation of the education of the pre-school age child to a lower priority, he pointed out that it resulted, for the major part, from the notion that pre-school education had to be approached in the same way as primary schooling with emphasis on buildings, teachers, equipment, books, etc. Pre-school education, he explained, should refer to the entire range of home-based, family and community-assisted, informal as well as formal efforts towards early stimulation and education of the young child. Pointing out that the breakdown in traditional child rearing practices was near universal, he urged that compensatory and remedial measures had to be taken to ensure that the educational needs of the young child were adequately and satisfactorily met.

6. Mr. Dieuzeide, further, stated that few countries in the world today were free from the factors which demand immediate attention to the expansion, improvement and development of

pre-school education. All societies have to recognize that the stimuli available for a young child to develop intellectually and emotionally are being rapidly eroded, he said. Children were increasingly left to their own devices for the major part of the day and whether they watch television programmes indiscriminately or wander about in the fields, the situation is identical. They were deprived of the stimulation and the guidance which would further their full and total development and which the adult world was expected to provide them. Unesco, in its search for different models and modalities, had taken note of the innovative nature of the experimental work in a number of countries regarding the content of pre-school educational programmes, methods, participation of parents and other aspects. He concluded with the request that the Consultation should make specific recommendations and suggestions for consideration in preparing Unesco's Medium Term Plan for the period 1984-89.

7. The Consultation elected the Bureau as follows:

Chairman	-Fr. Gerard Pantin
Rapporteur	-Dr. Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika
Working Committee) on Recommendations)	-Dr. Edith Grotberg
	Dr. Nuha Ismail
	Mr. Willem Van der Eyken
	Mrs. Malsiri Dias

Mr. Van der Eyken was assigned the task of preparing the final draft of the Recommendations.

The provisional timetable was adopted as the schedule of work.

OVERVIEW

Statistical review

8. The Consultation considered the document - A Statistical Overview of Pre-School Education in the World (ST/STE/PRESCH) - prepared by the Division of Statistics on Education, and presented by Mr. E.A. Fisher. He indicated, inter alia, that there had been a considerable growth in institutionalised pre-school education in different parts of the world during the last 5 to 10 years and highlighted the following main results of the analysis:

- Enrolments in pre-school education have increased from 36.2 million children in 1975 to 44.6 million in 1980. The highest increases were recorded in Asia* (3.4 million) and in Europe and the USSR (3.1 million).

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*The composition of the major areas is as generally used by the United Nations System for statistical purposes.

- In 1975 enrolment in pre-school education represented 15.1% of the age-group 3-5 years old: in 1980 it was 17.1%. The highest percentage was for Europe and the USSR (73% in 1980), and the lowest for Africa (2.1% in 1980), Asia and Latin America being 6.1% and 13.9% respectively.

- As a percentage of enrolment in primary education, pre-school enrolments increased from 9.6% in 1975 to 10.6% in 1980.

- Girls represented around 48% of total enrolment in pre-school education in 1980: the proportion was only 35% for Africa and between 47% and 50% for other continents.

- In 1980, 28% of pre-school enrolments were in private schools. The highest proportion was registered in Africa and Arab States (82%); the lowest in Europe and the USSR (17%). It was 51% in Asia and 30% in Latin America.

- In 1980 the pupil/teacher ratio was 18.8 in the world, varying from 15.4 in Europe and the USSR to 29.9 in Oceania. Ninety-eight per cent of pre-primary teachers in the world were women.

- In Africa only three countries had ratios of enrolment in pre-primary to the population aged 5 years of more than 50% (Kenya 94%, Morocco 78% and Mauritius 57%). In Latin and Northern America seven countries or territories had ratios of more than 100% : (Martinique 300%, Guadeloupe 268%, Jamaica 215%, United States of America 156%, Suriname 151%, Canada 108% and Guyana 105%). The highest ratios in Asia (greater than 100%) were in the following five countries or territories: Israel 298%, Hong Kong 235%, Japan 123%, Lebanon 119% and Viet Nam 110%. In Europe and the USSR only six out of 28 countries had ratios less than 100%, the lowest being Portugal with 39%. Fourteen countries had ratios higher than 200%, the highest of all being the German Democratic Republic (332%).

- In Oceania two countries had ratios higher than 50% : (Australia 68% and New Zealand 61%).

9. The Consultation observed that, because of the paucity and sometimes complete lack of reliable data, valid comparison between one country and another or between one region and another could not be easily made. The fact that the data relate only to institutional provision also made it difficult to examine the extremely important non-formal aspects of educational provision for the young child. It was further observed that the growth of formal pre-school education in the developed countries had principally resulted from industrialization which had led to changes in the educational functions of the family; thus the simple extension of this model to the developing countries where family structures are in many cases more cohesive and able to give support, should be viewed with caution.

Country Experiences

10. The Consultation had the opportunity to consider oral presentations on the present status of pre-school education in a number of countries as well as on the early childhood care and education programme of the Khmer refugee camps in Eastern Thailand and on the activities of the World Organization for Early Childhood Education. It was noted that in industrialized countries, in general, pre-school education, provided mostly through formal delivery systems such as kindergartens, nursery or pre-primary schools had become practically universal. While in some countries these institutions were organized and conducted mainly by private bodies, in some others, they were exclusively run by the government. Such governments assigned a high priority to the pre-school years of a child in ensuring his total development and in preparing him for schooling. Several country statements highlighted the increasing resources allotted in development plans for the expansion and improvement of early childhood care and education through creche-kindergartens for young children who needed day-care, kindergartens for normal children and special sanatorium-type kindergartens for disabled and unhealthy children. The provision of a substitute for the home and the family was a major concern in the industrialized countries which find, on the one hand, the demands of economic activity, and changing home conditions due to social factors, on the other, to be the main grounds for expanded services in early childhood care and education. Another important concern related to the rehabilitation of disabled children of pre-school age so that they could in due course be integrated into the mainstream of formal schooling. In general, the efforts in industrialized countries were in the process of being concentrated on effective coordination of the home, the pre-school day-care and/or educational centre and the community in a collective endeavour to evolve cost-effective mechanisms of promoting the physical, emotional, intellectual and psychomotor development of the young child. The emergence of play groups and such other informal activities was specially noted.

11. As regards the developing countries, the institutionalized efforts in pre-school education were modelled on the formal kindergarten or nursery school of the industrialized countries and generally made available by the private sector. These highly formal institutions, as a rule, catered for the privileged sections of the population in urban areas as they alone could afford the high costs involved. The principal aim of such institutions was to prepare the child for the primary school or, more specifically, for entrance to prestigious schools and the contents and the methods reflected those of the primary schools. It was not rare for such institutions to begin instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic as early as 4 years of age. The irrelevance of this type of pre-school as a means of universalizing facilities for the education of the pre-school child has been recognized in several countries,

where experimentation with locally valid and feasible models had been undertaken in earnest. It was noted that these innovations were mostly tried out in peri-urban and rural areas and the emphasis was on compensatory education for purposes of counteracting the deficiences in the environment. While models, which were not only low cost but also more relevant to the social and cultural context of the communities concerned, were emerging in most of the developing countries, their expansion to cover the entire population of pre-school age children and their improvement to cater for the development of the whole child were yet to be undertaken. As such the innovations remained sporadic and heavily dependent on the enthusiasm of the organisers.

12. As opposed to institutionalized arrangements which provided pre-school education, those which combined education with day-care were gaining in importance as women sought employment away from home voluntarily or in response to national appeals for them to participate in development. One country, in particular, approached its programme of expanding day-care and education facilities for the young child as a deliberate means of helping women to participate in the labour force and discovered that the nurseries could not be a substitute for the home, or that very young teachers of 16-17 years of age could not replace the mothers. In another country, the need for nurseries was to compensate for the absence of a male figure at home due to the prevailing patterns of family life and child-rearing in the region. Here, it was the male teacher replacing the father that needed to be prepared for this special role. In the case of unguarded and abandoned children in refugee camps, the shattering conditions of their life demanded priority consideration to be given to basic elements like a safe and clean area for children to play and minimum care and attention from the adults.

13. Practically all countries under review had problems in relation to the training and orientation of the personnel to plan, organize, conduct and administer programmes of early childhood care and education. In the industrialized countries, institutions of teacher education as well as higher education were increasingly providing facilities for training personnel for these programmes. These efforts were supplemented by various non-governmental organizations and voluntary bodies. Similarly, there was a growing interest in research pertaining to early childhood education and care. But in the developing countries, the situation was very different and far from satisfactory. The need to resort to para-professional personnel, such as in the country which has to employ girls aged 16+ as nursery teachers, entails the training of a widely varying clientele to acquire a vast range of skills and attitudes. Further, there were other considerations such as language, social level, cultural affinity which loomed large in importance in the recruitment and training of personnel. It was a general experience that a less qualified teacher from the social background of the child was more effective in communicating with both children

and parents , than a highly qualified person from another background. The programmes, which proved successful and lasting, generally had the characteristic of being heavily biased on "own people" and "own resources". Another significant experience was that programmes of early childhood care and education were most effective when they drew on the strengths of the family, the home and the community and supplemented them. This principle was highlighted by the World Organization for Early Childhood Education, which stated that its programme concentrated on modalities of pre-school education that respected the cultural identity of different communities.

PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Changing concept of pre-school education

14. The concept of pre-school education as reflected by both research findings and national social policies has been fast changing. Until recently it was mainly seen as a downward extension of formal primary education. There is increasing realisation that this view of pre-school education is too narrow and incomplete. The basic principles of pre-school education have in the past derived their main inspiration from developmental psychology; now increasingly the emphasis is shifting to a broader sociological approach, to include the child in the family and society. The stress is on flexibility of structures, on community participation and, above all, on the critical role of the family, particularly the mother, as the singlemost important mediator of the child's environment at this stage. As such pre-school education is no longer seen as schooling for the 4 to 6 (or any other similar) age group but redefined to cover the entire range of activities which contribute to the all-round development of the young child from conception to the commencement of formal schooling. A more appropriate terminology for such activities would be "Early Childhood Care and Education".

Objectives and Functions

15. The Consultation emphasized that any valid statement of objectives of early childhood care and education to be universally applicable, must of necessity, be general. The concrete nature of programmes to be designed for a given setting would vary depending upon the needs of the child, and the particular social and cultural environment in which he lived. Objectives will also differ for the two main divisions of the pre-school age, broadly 0-3 years and 3-6 or 7 years. Subject to these observations, the Consultation accepted that a statement of objectives for early childhood care and education should include the following:

(i) to foster the harmonious development of the child's personality;

(ii) to cater for the child's social needs for living in a group, for togetherness and for a sense of community;

(iii) to cater for the child's physical, cognitive and affective needs;

(iv) to provide support for parents, particularly for mothers with families;

(v) to cater for the child's need for self-expression through the child's own language, and

(vi) to promote the development of moral, civil, patriotic and religious concepts and values.

Assignment of Priority in Education Plans

16. In the past the pre-school stage of education has not, for the most part, been accorded high priority within national educational plans. This has been largely due to lack of understanding at the policy level, of the significance of the pre-school years. Attention is, in this context, drawn to three considerations which might influence policy. In the first place, the value of early identification and remediation of problems in the child's development (e.g. malnutrition, physical and mental handicaps) is well documented. Children so identified and helped either overcome the problems altogether or the problems are minimized. The results are critical in the formation of a healthy new generation. Secondly, there is a case for reassessing the priority of pre-school education within the overall education system. Early childhood education is increasingly found to be a valuable preparation for subsequent schooling, particularly for children who would otherwise be backward or at a disadvantage when entering more formal schooling. From the points of view of both early detection of problems and educational value, an exposure to early childhood care and education would be very useful to children who might never enter schooling. Lastly, it should be recognized that early childhood education, through its close linkage with the adult community, can be a valuable force for overall social development by helping adults obtain confidence, skills, improved self-concept, etc., through their active engagement in such programmes. Each country would develop its own applications of these ideas in the light of its needs and resources. But it is abundantly clear that early childhood care and education must receive a much higher consideration from policy makers, planners and administrators than has been the case so far.

Structures

17. Most programmes (including experimentations with innovative models), to date, have largely tended to concentrate on the later stage of the education of the young child, tending to act as a bridge between home and primary school. The need for models, which may be adapted to serve the wider concept of early childhood

care and education, is vital in many countries. The pre-school's particular virtue is that it has not in general become stylised and absorbed into official systems. This is especially so in developing countries. Early childhood care and education programmes are, therefore, more able to experiment and to welcome or use parents and other community resources. In deprived communities social development may be promoted by giving adults an experience in decision-making which is essential for community development. Such experience, which enhances confidence, can change attitudes and spill over into other aspects of life. It can also be basic to the promotion of the political will which is a critical resource if effective services in early childhood care and education, as in other areas, are to emerge.

18. It was also recognized that in developing countries structures designed to reach the young child were at an emerging state only. The value was underlined in this regard of increasing involvement of women's organizations, a proven vehicle for the development of basic pre-school educational services. In turn, such valuable community-based initiatives needed to be enriched by sensitive, non-threatening support and training activities.

Constraints

19. It was argued that governments, especially in developing countries, were inhibited from major action in the early childhood field through limitations of material resources. It was, however, observed by the Consultation, as substantiated also by statistical evidence from the background paper (ST/STE/PRESCH), that some developing countries, despite evident financial and other material limitations, had made impressive gains in the field of early childhood care and education. The predominant factor in providing basic services was, therefore, seen to be in the first instance, the political will and motivation of communities. There is evidently much that can be done in this regard despite constraints of resources. A related challenge to national and international agencies is to develop systems of support for this type of community-based initiative. Countries were urged to begin with the human, natural and cultural resources at the disposal of them all, gradually building towards more evolved models

STRATEGIES

20. The home, where almost all children of pre-school age spend the major part of their time, is the most important location for their early education. Learning occurs through parents, siblings, the elders in the family and the community as a whole - in short, the adult environment. Enhanced promotion of the participation by the adult in the early education of the young child calls for a strategy of (a) making the parents, in particular, and the other adults in general, aware

and conscious of their educational role; (b) training and equipping them with knowledge and skills, as well as inculcating positive attitudes relevant to early childhood care and education and (c) encouraging the provision of toys, playthings and other materials by promoting the production of such materials using local materials, traditional crafts and indigenous skills.

21. It is recognized that, due to a variety of causes, such as droughts, famines, civil disturbances and wars, many children in the world are deprived of a home. As many as 9 million children are estimated by Unicef to be among refugees living in camps*. Even a great number of children, who are orphans, or abandoned children, are compelled to live in institutions or forced into child labour or prostitution, as was reflected in studies and statements made during the International Year of the Child. Surrogate home environments, along with the learning facilities of the family and the community, need to be provided in such cases.

22. Rapidly changing social and economic conditions, particularly relating to working mothers, nuclear families, single parent home, etc., make it necessary for the young child to be kept in a creche or a day-care centre for the major part of the day. Already these day-care centres are being widely used as main links in a delivery system of basic services for children and thus immunization, nutrition and health programmes are centred on these institutions. A further element in a sound strategy would be to mobilize these also for the early education of the young child.

23. The final element in the strategy is to evolve economically feasible, and socially and culturally relevant models of early childhood care and education to promote the full development of the child and, where relevant, to prepare the child for primary schooling while at the same time serving as a means of promoting wider social development.

24. The Consultation thus identified a four-fold strategy for home and out-of-home situations in which the education of the young child had to be pursued. The implementation of such a strategy would be reinforced if backed up by a coordinated and multi-sectorial approach at national and international levels.

25. Again the point was stressed that the problem being faced was not to be viewed necessarily in material terms only. Lack of material resources often provided an escape route justifying lack of initiative. In the area of early childhood care and education, above all, there was a demonstrated capacity for

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*Unicef News 106/1980/4 - Children on the Move

community initiatives with minimal resources. These initiatives once launched offered a focus for other support efforts and, at the same time, a challenge to traditional international assistance methods.

Training of Personnel

26. In general it was stressed that services to the young child, such as nutrition, health, education, and day-care, should not be compartmentalized but, as far as possible, integrated into a cross-disciplinary approach. The importance was stressed of retraining teachers and other learning mediators in skills of communication with parents and communities while, at the same time, retraining health visitors/workers and community nurses in understanding the psychological aspects of the young child's development. The Consultation thus stressed that many categories of personnel needed to be trained and oriented for the kinds of programmes envisaged. In many countries, at all stages of development, there is a significant role for "para-professional" personnel drawn from the community to function as teachers and learning mediators. Their knowledge of the child's home environment and community and national affective qualities, enable such teachers to perform especially effectively with children in the younger age-range. Training and orientation programmes have, therefore, to cater for parents, older siblings, community leaders and specialized workers in health, nutrition and social services.

27. Such a wide clientèle calls for both innovative modes of training and the sensitive preparation of trainers to carry out such programmes. In many countries for many years to come it is important that suitable systems of education on-the-job be devised to enable them to begin the process of personnel and professional growth. Training content will clearly vary according to differing tasks and levels. However, the principle was stressed that trend towards fragmentation into separate specialized compartments, e.g. health worker, nutritionist, teacher, was to be guarded against and, as far as possible, a multi-disciplinary approach adopted.

28. The framework for such an approach to training personnel for early childhood care and education should essentially be that the whole child is the unit of concern. This means that trained personnel are always capable of dealing with the physical, nutritional, social, emotional, psychological and intellectual development and learning of children. This approach requires attention to each aspect at all times without setting up a hierarchy such as placing nutrition before early learning. Further, the child is seen as within a family which, in turn, is within the community. Within this wholistic framework, the contents of training programmes for parents (and other family members) paraprofessionals, volunteers, professionals and community workers could be drawn, as appropriate, from the following components:

a. knowledge about the physical, nutritional, soci l, emotional, psychological and intellectual development of children;

b. knowledge about how children learn and how learning and development can be promoted;

c. knowledge about cultural and linguistic preferences of families and the community;

d. skills in assessing the child's level of development and evaluating growth in development and learning;

e. skills in using and developing materials to promote development and learning;

f. skills in working with families;

g. skills in utilizing community facilities and resources;

h. skills in organizing and running an early childhood care and education programme from a simple one to a more complex model such as a centre;

i. skills in coordinating, integrating or linking programmes, elements, services and resources;

j. skills in training others.

Cost Consideration and Resources

29. The question of cost is important to all countries. The participants described many ways to initiate and develop programmes at minimal cost. These included the formation of informal groups of volunteers to undertake parental education, to visit homes with suggestions for early childhood care and education, to help develop play-materials and toys.

30. Attention was also directed to a variety of material and personnel resources which in many countries could be profitably exploited to respond to the educational needs of the pree-school age child. Mention was made of accomodation available in temples, mosques, churches, traditional religious schools and the like in many countries which could be utilized for developing programmes of early childhood care and education. In many countries there are also available "retired" personnel as well as people with education who are unemployed or looking for work, whose services could with advantage be used for this purpose. Youth organizations, students and teachers who can spare time are examples of other categories of personnel whose services can also be mobilized in the extension and development of such services. There is need to involve various non-

governmental bodies active in this field to work with both parents and children. In many instances, those involved in initial stages become the spearhead for higher levels of involvement and commitment.

Coordination

31. The issue of coordination, at national and international level, was viewed as critical. Many agencies, with different approaches and philosophies, were directing themselves towards the provision and support of early childhood services. In some countries there had been effective efforts by Governments to coordinate these agencies at the national level. But this was not necessarily viewed as a task for governments in all instances. The need exists, therefore, to evolve suitable mechanisms for coordinating and harmonizing the wide range of activities undertaken by different ministries and departments of government and non-government organizations concerned with activities in favour of the young child, such as women's organizations and religious bodies. Mobilizing the particular skills in social development of these diverse organizations so as to give the young child adequate coverage in their programmes was considered to be an important aspect of such coordination.

32. Likewise there is considerable room for improved coordination and integration of the functions and activities of agencies working at the international level. In the present circumstances where the educational and developmental needs of the young child far exceed the resources available to meet them, the adoption of a multi-sectoral approach offers one real possibility of coordinated effort to improve resource utilization. There was also an evident need to improve information exchange and, thereby, the flow of resources towards initiatives for early childhood.

National Policy

33. A useful, if not essential, step in the direction of mobilizing resources and ensuring coordination would be for governments to formulate, according to each country's practice, a comprehensive policy on the needs of the child and the ways and means considered necessary to respond to them. All early childhood care and education programmes should increasingly be developed within the framework of such a policy.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

34. The Consultation, on the basis of its deliberations on the problems, issues and strategies pertaining to the education of the pre-school age child, arrived at the following conclusions:

- The intrinsic unity of the child and its imperatives on the concentration of efforts on the total development of the child demand that all basic services contributing to the child's development be approached in an integrated manner, erradicating the existing tendencies towards the compartimentalization of these services;

- early childhood care and education should be conceived as an integral service extending to the entire age-range from conception to the entry into formal schooling;

- early childhood care and education has to be provided as a right to all children, while priority, due to resource limitations, must be assigned to deprived, disadvantaged and underserved populations;

- the natural environment and the first educational institution of the child is the home and the principal agent contributing to his development is the family. Hence the enhancement of the educative capacity of the parents, the siblings and other adults in the family and the community should receive the utmost attention;

- structured as well as unstructured delivery systems need to be evolved according to resources, socio-economic conditions and cultural traditions of each community. Many opportunities are presented by the still not fully explored field of early childhood care and education to experiment with innovative structures, modalities and methods. An innovative approach has also to be adopted to mobilize hitherto unutilized or under-utilized resources in the community, specially in the form of human resources available for voluntary services outside the governmental machinery;

- the training, retraining and orientation of both professional and para-professional personnel connected with early childhood care and education is of paramount importance and it too calls for both structured and unstructured approaches including the use of media;

- an effective way to overcome problems of resources and coordination would be to formulate, according to the practice of the country concerned, a comprehensive national policy on early childhood care and education;

- the role of the international agencies, both governmental and non-governmental, is to assist Member States in identifying suitable models - both formal and non-formal - for adaptation according to the needs of the communities concerned; sharing experience relating to content, methods, materials, management and resource mobilization; encouraging the generating and the dissemination of research findings, facilitating the training of key personnel; and identifying sources of funding and other resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

35. Based on an examination of the current situation of pre-school education and a review of national strategies for a global approach to the needs of pre-school age children, the Consultation made the following recommendations:

A. FOR MEMBER STATES :-

1. In discussing the pre-school area, Member States should consider the entire age range from conception until the age at which the child normally begins basic, or primary formal education.

2. As services benefitting the pre-school age child involves not only the welfare of the unborn foetus and its mother, but also the developing toddler as well as the child who might benefit from a more formal education, an appropriate term to reflect this concept should be EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION.

3. Considering that early childhood care and education is the right of every child, and not restricted to groups which may be perceived as being in the greatest need, overall social development planning should include essential components of early childhood care and education for all citizens.

4. Early childhood care and education should contribute to the mutual enhancement and maintenance of the cultural values of the society concerned.

5. Programmes of early childhood care and education should be essentially child-and family-centred, enhancing and supporting the prime role of the family as the essential educative environment of the child.

6. Recognising that, in many countries, women still bear the main burden of child-care, programmes of support for women should be a significant strategy whereby resources are offered to their children.

7. Recognising that the full potential of the young child cannot be realised without the active inter-action of his family and community, early childhood care and education programmes should operate at the local level, and focus essentially on the family - or, where absent, on the surrogate family. For this purpose, it is necessary to develop strategies for creating social networks within communities to enhance support and the exchange of information, and to create the essential framework for communal action.

8. Local networks of parents, relatives, friends and relations should receive the help of local "enablers", drawn from the community, who might, with very basic training, act as promoters of local initiatives for early childhood care and education programmes.

9. Involving such locally-based co-ordinators, an effort should be made to develop flexible, indigenous and locally-controlled early childhood care and education programmes which could also meet the broader needs of the community.

10. In view of the fact that, in some instances, locally-produced activity materials prepared for families and the community are not being in current programmes or that, when produced, they do not reflect the direct experiences of local people, it should be ensured that

a) where local activity materials already exist, they be accorded preference;

b) where they do not already exist, they should be drawn from the immediate local environment, so as to have a direct relationship to the experience of children, parents and community; and

c) programmes should be conducted, and materials written, in the language of the local community, thus enhancing mother-tongue education and desirable local cultural values.

11. At the community level, programmes of early childhood care and education should contain, as an essential ingredient, parental education and support. Health education, literacy, skills learning, as well as more direct teaching about child development, should be fundamental components of such parent education.

12. Recognising the inherent possibilities for low-cost local programmes, with minimum financial commitment, governments should not delay or discourage local initiatives in the field of early childhood care and education.

13. Noting that Member States in general already allocated considerable resources to the development of primary school programmes and that, far from diverting their attention from this essential goal, the development of early childhood care and education might substantially contribute to making first level education programmes more relevant, and hence more cost-effective; and recognising that research has pointed to the positive link between early childhood stimulation and subsequent school attainment, early childhood programmes should be seen as a necessary component in the development of education systems.

14. In view of the need for effective training and development of relevant personnel to contribute to, and enhance, local developments of early childhood programmes, emphasis should be placed on the need to produce personnel with a multi-disciplinary approach, able to act as co-ordinators and promoters of services to, and for, the community.

15. As the local-level programmes emphasised a person-to-person relationship within a wider social network, supported by local "enablers" drawn from the community, the short, basic programmes of induction and continuing orientation must be provided for local personnel, at a level requiring only a basic educational background.

16. Priority should also be accorded to re-training and re-orientation of existing professional and instructional staffs currently involved in early childhood care and education work. Such re-training should give special attention to inter-disciplinary aspects, as well as communication with families and communities.

17. Such personnel should have, in addition, an essential role in coordinating services, so that their training or re-training should reflect the variety of resources - among them of health, education, hygiene, housing, transport, community development - and the many agencies that impinge on the welfare of the child and its family. This implies the need to develop, in conjunction with international agencies, specific training programmes focussed on local needs for multi-disciplinary or co-ordinating staff.

18. At the national level, government agencies with an interest and involvement in childhood and family affairs - such as health, education, social services, rural development and women's affairs, etc. - should also reflect this co-ordinated approach. They should examine to what extent such separate services can be co-ordinated at both national and regional levels to offer the most effective support for local initiatives.

B. FOR UNESCO AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

19. Unesco, together with other interested agencies, should, in the light of these recommendations, appoint specific specialists in early childhood care and education to the respective regional offices, with responsibility to work with Member States in their areas. Such specialists, with adequate and appropriate support, should have as their role the task of stimulating the development of activity materials, training programmes, an interchange of information throughout their region, and should - at the same time - be in a position both to encourage new developments and report on progress.

20. UNESCO should urge Member States to re-consider their methodology of gathering data so as not only to reflect the needs of differing age groups within the whole field of early childhood care and education, but to throw more light on informal provision being offered at the local community level.

21. Recognising that in demanding information, including statistical data, which would more adequately reflect informal, locally-based provision, Member States were also seeking ways in which qualitative, as well as quantitative, data could be produced, and noting, at the same time, that such data should not be presented purely in terms of traditional measures (numbers of institutions, enrolments, teachers, etc.), UNESCO, as a matter of urgency, should conduct discussions with Member States and with statistical and other experts to explore the possibilities of developing new and agreed measures and techniques of data-gathering.

22. As a stimulus to local initiatives, described earlier in the recommendations, UNESCO has an essential role in producing detailed case studies of successful initiatives in programmes of early childhood care and education. Such studies, conducted at local level, should not only reflect the strategies employed, but should, in order that comparisons could be made with other schemes, provide details on the production of local materials, the essential support services employed, the degree to which parental and community co-ordination and co-operation had been achieved, and the costs involved.

23. Consistent with the earlier recommendations to Member States to develop locally-based programmes, a further essential role for UNESCO in the medium-term is to provide fellowships and other facilities to enable national child care and education personnel to exchange information and to learn from other national programmes.

24. UNESCO, together with other international agencies involved in the field of early childhood care and education, should continue to sponsor and conduct international seminars and conferences over the whole field, not only to stimulate the exchange of information and new ideas, but to review progress and offer guidance for further developments.

25. UNESCO should establish a series of "workshops" for early childhood personnel, to focus especially on the design and production of indigenous materials and activities, toys, books, posters, games and other resources.

26. In view of the fact that Unesco's publications and materials were not always accessible to those active in the field of early childhood care and education, and that expert support provided through international agencies involved long delays and often resulted in inappropriate help being offered, UNESCO, together with Member States, should examine the machinery of its distribution of publications and also consider how it might both speed up, and make more sensitive, its response to demands for assistance.

27. UNESCO should strengthen its cooperation with those international organisations currently generating and disseminating research findings in the field of early childhood care and education, bearing in mind the need to present such findings in a form which could be easily assimilated into local programmes. New knowledge should, so far as was possible, be available to communities in their local language, and - to the extent possible - generated at the local level. Support should also be given to the development of relevant research where little or none exists.

28. In order to play a more dynamic role in the development of early childhood care and education programmes, particularly in the developing countries, the Secretariat of UNESCO should review, as a matter of urgency, to what extent the organisation could both improve and co-ordinate its own present services that impinge on this wide field of activity, and where, within its own organisation, it would need to strengthen its resources to support the strategies recommended earlier.

29. UNESCO, together with other inter-governmental and international funding agencies, should examine ways of improving collaboration and co-operation among themselves, to harmonise their efforts and maximise increasingly hard-pressed resources.

30. In the longer term, UNESCO has an essential role to play as a stimulating, enabling and supporting agency throughout the whole field of early childhood care and education; and it should, therefore, adopt this area of activity as a major focus of work in its future planning to work more effectively with Member States to raise national and international consciousness about the needs of children and families throughout the world, and to transform those needs into dynamic programmes of support.

31. Recognising that these recommendations inevitably involve additional resources, especially in the provision of trained personnel, and being aware that such resources are both limited and under increasing pressure, UNESCO should review its budgetary allocations to the field of early childhood care and education, both in the medium-term and longer-term, so as to provide the necessary resources to implement the recommendations outlined in this report.

ANNEX I

ED.81/CONF 605/1
PARIS 27 July 1981
Original: English

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

Consultation on Pre-School Education
23 - 27 November 1981

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting.

2. Election of the Bureau.

3. Adoption of the schedule of work.

4. Overview of results obtained and the difficulties encountered over the last 10 years in the development and expansion of pre-school education.

5. Evaluation of Unesco's action in cooperation and assistance in the field of pre-school education.

6. Discussion of specific issues, strategies, and approaches which are relevant to the socio-economic conditions and cultural traditions (with special reference to the disadvantaged groups) - such as:

   a) aims, policies and practices (formal and non-formal) affecting pre-school education;

   b) objectives, content and methods;

   c) learning opportunities provided by: professionals, para-professionals, parents, family, community;

   d) strategies - multi-sectorial approach - mobilization of unused and under-utilized resources and facilities.

7. Recommendations:

   a) priority areas for activities - medium and long-term perspectives;

      i) at national level
      ii) for regional and international co-operation;

   b) specific recommendations for Unesco's Medium-Term Plan, e.g.

      i) priorities for action at various levels.

      ii) new strategies and modalities to develop and/or adapt for specific and/or general use.

      iii) training of personnel, professional and non-professional

8. Adoption of the report.

9. Closure of meeting.

ANNEX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Dr. Rosemarie BAARTZ	Deputy Director and Professor Pedagogical School of Kindergarteners training c/o The National Commission of the German Democratic Republic for Unesco Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the German Democratic Republic Marx Engels Platz 2 PSF 101 102 BERLIN (German Democratic Republic)
Mme N. BONI	Ministère de l'Enseignement Premaire et de l'Education Télévisuelle Section Préscolaire ABIDJAN Côte d'Ivoire
Mrs. Malsiri DIAS	Executive Secretary Children's Secretariat and Deputy Director Ministry of Plan Implementation 4th Floor Chartered Bank Building COLOMBO 1 (Sri Lanka)
Dr. Edith GROTBERG	Director- Research, Development and Evaluation Division Administration for Children, Youth and Families Office of Human Development Services, Department of Health and Human Services Box 1082 WASHINGTON D.C. 20013 (U.S.A.)
Mrs. Randa KHOURY	Assistant Director-Supervisor and Head Teacher at Beirut University College Norsery School, Instructor for Teachers from Lebanon and Arab States on Training for Pre-school Education P.O. Box 11-4080 BEIRUT (Lebanon)
Mrs. Huda ISMAIL	c/o UNICEF P.O. Box 5902 BEIRUT (Lebanon)
Dr. Inonge MBIKUSITA-LEWANIKA	Family Welfare & the Young Child Adviser UNICEF Regional Office for Eastern Africa P.O. Box 44145 NAIROBI (Kenya)

Mr. Gerard PANTIN	Executive Director, SERVOL Frederick Street PORT OF SPAIN (Trinidad)
Mme E. G. PYLUGINA	c/o Commission de l'URSS pour l'Unesco 9, Prospekt Kalinina MOSCOU G-19 (URSS)
Mrs. Y. SATO	United Nations High Commission for Refugees Education Unit - Pre-school Programme Khao-I-Danga Holding Centre P.O. Box 2-121 Rajdamnern BANGKOK 2 (Thailand)
Mrs. SUN YAN	Director of Pre-school Education Division Department No: 2 of Primary Education Ministry of Education Vice-President of the Pre-school Education Council of China BEIJING (China)
Mr. W. Van der EYKEN	University of Bristol Department of Child Health 54 Peckarmans Wood LONDON, SE 26 6RZ England (United Kingdom)

REPRESENTATIVES AND OBSERVERS

Mlle Micheline d'AGOSTINO	Consultante au Centre International de l'Enfance Château de Longchamp Bois de Boulogne 75016 - PARIS (France)
Sra. Olga CELETTE	Délégation permanente du Venezuela auprès de l'Unesco Maison de l'Unesco
Mme M. GOUTARD	Présidente Mondiale de l'OMEP 1, rue de Neuchâtel 67380 LINGOLSHEIM (France)

Mme V. KOTYRLO	Spécialiste - Education Préscolaire c/o Commission nationale pour l'Unesco Kiev 15 Karl Liebknecht (URSS)
Mme Françoise LAFITTE	President UNESCO NGO Standing Committee
Mme J. MANNONI	Permanent Representative to Unesco Bureau international catholique de l'enfance 137, boulevard Malesherbes 75017 - PARIS (France
Dr. A. MOAREFI	Chief, Health Education Unit World Health Organization 1211 GENEVA 27 (Switzerland)
Mr. Maitland STOBERT	Head of the School Education Division Council of Europe BP 431 R6 67006 STRASBOURG CEDEX (France)
Dr. Nico Van OUDENHOVEN	United Nations Children's Fund 866 UN Plaza NEW YORK, N.Y. 10017 (U.S.A.)
Dr. A. Wood	Chief, Division of Operations and Programme Services Bernard van Leer Foundation Koninginnegracht 52 P.O. Box 85905 2508 CP THE HAGUE (Netherlands)

UNESCO REGIONAL OFFICES

Mlle A. GNALI	Programme Specialist in Pre-school Education Regional Office for Education in Africa B.P. 3311 DAKAR (Senegal)
Dr. H. MANTYNEN	Programme Specialist in Out-of-School Education Regional Office for Education in the Arab States

UNESCO SECRETARIAT

Mr. H. DIEUZEIDE	Director Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education Representative of the Director General
Mr. A. W.P. GURUGE	Chief - Unit for Cooperation with Unicef and Unesco Division of Financing of Education
Mr. E.A. FISHER	Programme Specialist Office of Statistics
Miss Ida SUBARAN	Programme Specialist Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education
Mr. Z. ZACHARIEV	Chief Division of Structures, Content, Methods and Techniques of Education

ANNEX III

SELECTED LIST OF UNESCO PUBLICATIONS ON THE YOUNG CHILD

1. Bibliografía sobre Educación Preprimaria. Santiago de Chile, Unesco: Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe, 1977.
(OREALC/Bibliografía/13)

2. Comparative report on "The role of working mothers in early childhood education in five countries". Paris, Unesco, 1978.

3. Child, Family, Community. New Series of Unesco/UNICEF Programme of Educational Assistance. (Notes, Comments ...)

4. The Child and his development from birth to six years old. Paris, Unesco/International Children's Centre, 1976.
(Also published in French and Spanish)

5. The Child and Play: Theoretical Approaches and Teaching Applications. Paris, Unesco, 1980. (Educational studies and documents, 34)
(Also published in French and Spanish)

6. The Child's Right to Education. Paris, Unesco 1979.
(Also published in French and Spanish)

7. Un estudio de caso de los programas no escolarizados de educación inicial en Perú. Santiago de Chile, Unesco: Oficina Regional de Educación para América latina y el Caribe, 1980
(Alternativas para la Educación Preprimaria)

8. Executive Board, 109th session, 1980. Unesco and the child: report of the Director-General on the implementation of 105 EX/Decision 5.1.2 (V)
Paris, Unesco, 1980.

9. Family, community and media in the education of the disadvantaged child Annotated bibliography. Bulletin of the IBE. Educational documentation and information, n° 214, 1st quarter 1980.
(Also published in French)

10. Identificación de las necesidades educativas básicas. Investigación en una comunidad urbana marginal del Gran Santiago (Chile). Santiago de Chile, Unesco: Oficina Regional de Educación para América Latina y el Caribe, 1980

11. Impact of Educational Television on Young Children. Paris, Unesco, 1981
(Educational studies and documents, 40)

12. Interagency consultation on the Needs of the Child, Paris, 1980 Final Report. Paris, Unesco 1980. (ED/-80/WS.49)

13. International Conference on Education. 37th session, Geneva, 1979. Current Major Trends in Education and the Welfare of the Child. Final report. Paris, Unesco, 1979. (ED/MD/57) (Also available in French and Spanish)

14. International Symposium on Studies on Development and the Reduction of Inequalities in different Socio-Cultural Context, especially with Regard to Children and Family Life-Styles. Doha, Qatar,1981. Final report. Paris, Unesco, 1981.

15. Issues and Opportunities in Pre-school Learning. Prospects, Vol. VII, n°4, 1977. (Also published in French and Spanish).

16. Meeting of Experts on "New Approaches to Education of Children of Pre-school Age. Bangkok, 1976. Final report. Bangkok, Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and Oceania, 1976.

17. Meeting of Experts on The Psychological Development of Children and Implication for the Educational Process. Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, USA. March 1974. Final report. Paris, Unesco, 1976. (ED-74/CONF.623/8) (Also published in French)

18. Meeting of Experts on Special Education. Paris, 1979. Final report. Paris, Unesco, 1979. (ED-79/CONF.606/COL.28) (Also available in French and Spanish).

19. Meeting of Experts on Pre-school Education as the First Phase of Life-Long Education. Paris, 1976. Final report. Paris, Unesco, 1976. (ED-76/CONF.608/COL.9) (Also available in French and Spanish).

20. Parent-Education, n°s 1-13. Series of Unesco/UNICEF Programme of Educational Assistance. (Notes and comments).

21. Pre-school, n°s 1-22. Series of Unesco/UNICEF Programme of Educational Assistance. (Notes and comments)

22. Printed for Children. World Children's book Exhibition. (Foreword by Amadou-Mathar M'Bow Director General of Unesco). Minchen, K. G. Saur, 1978.

23. Regional Seminar on The Needs of the African Child and Adaptation of Pre-school Education to His Cultural, Economic and Social Conditions. Dakar, 1979. Final report. Dakar, Unesco Regional Office for Education in Africa, 1979.

24. Seminar on the Promotion of Pre-school Education in the Arab Republic of

25. Using Pre-primary Education as a Means for Developing Slum Communities. A case study of "Shanty Town" in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad. Santiago de Chile, Unesco: Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1980.

26. Wall, W.D. Constructive Education for Children. London, Harrap/Paris, Unesco, 1979.